and patrolling between Mandapam and Point Calimere has been intensified Government have also taken steps to improve liaison with Tamil Nadu state fisheries department and communications with the Sri Lankan naval authorities to prevent recurrence of such incidents. It may be recalled that in one incident in which a Sri Lankan naval patrol boat was found harassing Indian fishermen in Indian waters, the boat war apprehended by our Coast Gaurd and the crew were detained.

Progress of Talks for Accord in Sri Lanka

599. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state what progress has been made in the talks between Sri Lanka and the representatives of Tamil organisations in Sri Lanka for a peaceful accord in the Island Republic ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI B. R. BHAGAT) : The second round of talks at Thimphu was adjourned in mid August. Thereafter, talks were held between August 23 and 31 with Dr. H.W. Jayewardene and other Sri Lankan officials who had participated in the Thimphu talks. On the basis of these talks a working paper was prepared which could serve as a basis for further negotiations towards a political settlement. A team of three Sri Lankan officials visited New Delhi from September 10—13 and in discussions with senior officials of the Ministry gave some amplification of certain issues which figured in the working paper.

Talks were held with the various Tamil groups in September on matters relating to maintenance of an effective ceasefire and issues in the working paper. The Foreign Secretary later visited Sri Lanka on September 26 and held discussions with President Jayewardene and other leaders on matters relating to maintenance of the ceasefire and setting up of a Monitoring Commitee to monitor the ceasefire.

Thereafter, further talks were held with the Tamil groups in October and the views of the groups in regard to a political solution were conveyed to the Sri Lankan President and other leaders by the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary during discussions in Nassau. A further round of talks with the Tamil groups was held from Novermber 7—9. Further contacts with the Sri Lankan side were held during Prime Minister's visit to Oman.

Effects of Deforestation

600. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the nine member international task force on forests has identified India as one of the 56 countries of the world which are critically affected by wide-spread deforestation and steady destruction of natural wastelands ; and

(b) what steps are being taken to preserve the Himalayan eco-system which is the most critical watershed in the world ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) and (b) The Government have been the newspaper report on the study.

Bomb blasts in Kashmir Valley

601. SHRI GHULAM RASOOL KAR : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of bomb blasts in Kashmir Valley since December, 1984;

(b) how many people have been arrested and against how many people cases have been instituted in the court ; and